

**Determination of Eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places**  
**Seward Commercial Historic District**  
**8/11/04**

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**1. Name of Property**

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Seward Commercial Historic District

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**2. Location**

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street & number: Various

city or town Seward

state Alaska code 122 county Kenai Peninsula Borough  
zip code 99664

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**3. Classification**

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
- ☐ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
- ☒ district
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

Number of Resources within Property: 50

Number of resources previously listed in the National  
Register 2 : Brown & Hawkins General Store, 1904  
Van Gilder Hotel, 1917

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#### 4. Function or Use

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##### Historic Functions

Cat: Commerce/Trade/Domestic Sub: business, financial institution, specialty store, department store, restaurant, multiple dwellings, single dwellings

##### Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Same Sub: Same

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#### 5. Description

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Architectural Classification: Other

##### Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: concrete, earth

Roof: wood, asphalt, metal

Walls: wood, metal, stucco

##### Narrative Description

Seward is a small town located on Alaska's beautiful Resurrection Bay. In 1903 Seattle developer Frank Ballaine chose the location as a perfect spot to begin building a railroad. The townsite was neatly laid out spreading east from the nearby mountains towards the water in 40 blocks with 1,211 lots. Eager to accommodate the railroad workers, businesses, such as the "Bank Saloon" building, began popping up along the main thoroughfare that extended from the dock. Over the next several decades, businesses flourished along both sides of Fourth Avenue with a sprinkling of mixed commercial buildings and residences along Third and Fifth Avenues. Fifty buildings and one structure were evaluated for eligibility to the Seward Commercial Historic District. Unfortunately, the district no longer retains its integrity and is not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

##### Area of consideration

The 50 buildings and 1 structure that were considered within the Seward Commercial Historic District are in a four block area between Railroad and Adams Streets, and Third and Fifth Avenues. All of the buildings fall within the Original Town site, although there have been several subsequent replats.

Additional consideration was given to a potentially smaller commercial historic district that focused primarily along Fourth Avenue from Railway Avenue on the south to Adams Street on the north. This district is where the majority of Seward businesses were concentrated during the time of significance.

### **Historic Appearance**

From 1903-1943, the Seward business district consisted primarily of shops, restaurants and hotels. The buildings were defined by the narrow lot widths, were rectangular or square-shaped, and were one or two stories. The symmetrically laid out streets and blocks provided an orderly appearance and provided easy access to the businesses. All buildings fronted directly on the streets. Along Fourth Avenue there was a cohesive appearance with commercial storefront windows and false fronts, with some fronts extending above the roof lines to conceal the buildings with gable roofs. There were few vacant lots along Fourth. Third and Fifth development was much more mixed with several single dwelling residences amidst commercial properties, several vacant lots, and no unified storefront appearance. The buildings that would be considered "Contributing" within this district are simple frame buildings which retain original features such as stucco siding and commercial display windows. The residences are small, one-story houses with log or shiplap siding.

Important streetscape elements include Fourth Avenue as the entryway into Seward from the main city dock. The grand three story Arcade building, built in 1922 (expanded in 1924-25 and again in 1937), with its close proximity to the dock and its orientation on the distinct triangular lot stood as a symbolic greeter to the town. The creation of Hoben's Park across Railway from the Arcade, further enhanced the town's "welcoming" elements.

### **Changes to the District**

The November 1941 fire destroyed at least sixteen buildings on the east side of Fourth Avenue. Several of Seward's business owners immediately set to rebuilding their stores. By 1943, approximately six businesses along the east block of Fourth Avenue were in place: the Seward Bakery (1942); Seward Shop (1942); Urbach's (1941); Quilt Shop (1943); Alaska Shop (1941); and the Arcade (1943), a modest one story built on top of the previous building basement and foundation. A separate fire destroyed most of the buildings on the west side of Fourth Avenue between Washington and Railway, including the original Liberty Theatre. In 1942 three similarly constructed buildings were erected on the site, across the street from the Arcade, that today house: Christo's Restaurant, Tony's Bar, and Elks Club. These buildings were similar in style and in function as to the other businesses within the district and provided continuity of the commercial district. The streetscape remained largely the same, although there were more vacant lots on the east side of Fourth Avenue than were located along the street prior to the 1941 fire.

Additional buildings within the district that were constructed after the fire include the Liberty Theatre (1943) on Adams Street; CJ Pawnshop (1943) on Washington, and the Johnson property (1942) on Fifth. After the rebuilding phase, however, construction drastically slowed down; a reflection of Seward's economic downturn.

From the later half of the 1940s to 1950 there was a smattering of new construction within the district including the Buick Apartments on Third and Harbor Club and First Video on Fifth. The building pattern along Fifth Avenue was a mix of commercial, residential, and vacant lots. Several of the historic buildings such as the Louvre/Pioneer Bar and Arctic Brotherhood Hall (later known as the Dreamland Bowling Alley, located on the southeast corner) buildings no longer exist and new construction has taken their places. Exterior alterations, including the Johnson cabin and Mai Residence, as well as later construction such as the New Seward Saloon, and the modern Hotel Edgewater impact the historic integrity of the streetscape and do not contribute to the historic district.

The east side of Third Avenue has lost its historic integrity as well. The oldest properties left on the block are a 1925 built stucco residence which now has a modern metal blue colored roof and the Buick Apartment building (constructed 1945) which has undergone modifications as well. The Shea property Quonset hut and related machine shop have been determined ineligible for the National Register in a 2002 Determination of Eligibility. A playground, two new housing constructions, and vacant lots round out the block.

Since 1950 six new buildings have been built on Fourth Avenue. Several of the larger buildings have introduced non historic elements such as arches with columns (Apollo Restaurant), sloping roof lines (DJs Wheelhouse) and modern windows, siding, and signage (Showcase Lounge).

### **Historic District Integrity**

Properties need to have a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, setting and workmanship to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The Seward historic commercial district retains much of its setting with the continuity of its planned grid pattern, building and street orientation and streetscape elements including some of the original Victorian 5-light, 4-arms down with gargoyle lamp posts on Fifth Avenue. Additional lamp posts have been replaced with in-kind Victorian lamps which maintain the similar pattern of placement along the streets including Fourth and Adams. Some of the original Arcade building sidewalk vault lights that were placed to illuminate the shower areas in the basement remains today. Two of these vault light panels are visible along the Fourth Avenue side and the other two panels are located along Washington Street, although these have been covered with asphalt and can only be seen from the basement vantage point.

There is a continuity of historic function within the district. Today one can drive up Fourth Avenue and park in front of Brown & Hawkins much as customers did seventy years ago. The district consists of the same types of buildings that have been there historically - commercial, residential and transportation related. A few buildings such as the Van Gilder Hotel and Brown and Hawkins, which are listed on the National Register, and the Liberty Theatre maintain their historic integrity.

Substantial changes, however, have occurred to the majority of buildings within the district. The combination of altered storefronts, the intrusion of modern siding (as found on the Seward Commercial Company building and the Yukon Bar), new unsympathetic construction, and vacant lots have significantly impacted the appearance of the cohesive and historic commercial district. In addition, the Fourth Avenue entryway into town has been greatly minimized with the loss of the town's welcoming landmark, the original Arcade building, and the modern construction of the SeaLife Center which now serves to block the south end of Fourth Avenue. Adjacent walkways and parking have incorporated the formerly separate Hoben's Park into the Center's landscaping.

#### **Determination for Lack of Integrity as an Historic District**

According to the National Register of Historic Places criteria, at least 51% of the properties within a district should have integrity to be considered eligible as an historic district. This criteria reflects that an eligible historic district will retain its integrity *as a whole*, and that the majority of its components will be substantially unchanged since the period of significance.

Within the commercial historic district that includes portions of Fourth Avenue, Adams, Third, Fifth, Washington and Railway streets, 50 buildings and 1 structure were evaluated for their eligibility to the district. 31 of these buildings were constructed during the 1903-1943 time period of significance and 20 were built after this time period. Of these 31 properties only 2 buildings are clearly contributing: Brown & Hawkins and the Van Gilder Hotel. The Liberty Theatre may be contributing but more investigation needs to be done before that can be determined.

Additional consideration was given to a Fourth Avenue business district that excluded properties along Third and Fifth Avenues. This captured 26 buildings that were built during the 1903-1943 period. Of this number, however only 2 currently maintain their historic integrity: Brown & Hawkins and Van Gilder Hotel. It is not known at this time whether or not the Liberty Theatre retains its historic integrity. While the other 23 buildings are currently not considered eligible, many of these buildings do retain their scale, mass, and setting. Primary alterations to these buildings are façade treatments including changes to the false fronts, the addition of modern awnings and siding, as well as changes to the window openings and type. Some of these building changes may be reversible, as long as reversal of these alterations would not require the use of an

inordinate proportion of new materials. Returning the following buildings back to their historic appearance is encouraged and may warrant reconsideration for a Determination of Eligibility to the National Register:

Seward Commercial Company (1906), Fourth Avenue  
Orlander Building (1916), Fourth Avenue  
Osbo Building (1905), Fourth Avenue  
Seward Shop (1943), Fourth Avenue  
Urbach's (1943), Fourth Avenue  
Alaska Shop (1943), Fourth Avenue  
Arcade Building (1943), Fourth Avenue  
Navigant/World Express Travel (1941), NE corner of Adams and Fourth  
C Jays Pawnshop (1943), to the west and adjacent to the 310 Washington  
Street residence  
Tony's Bar (1942, Fourth Avenue

The non-contributing properties that have been changed too drastically to be considered reversible include:

Old Solly's, Washington Street (1916)  
Brosius & Noon, Railway (1909)  
Fire & Ice, Fourth Ave.(1916)  
Carson Meats, Fourth Ave.(1920)  
Seward Trading Co.,Fourth Ave.(1922)  
Starbird Studio,Fourth Ave.(1941)  
Yukon Bar residence, Washington St.(1934)  
Elks Club, Fourth Ave.(1942)  
Christo's Palace, Fourth Ave.(1942)  
Mai Residence, Fifth Ave., (1940)  
Johnson Property and Cabin, Fifth Ave., (1942)

In sum, with façade changes to many of the historic buildings, as well as with unsympathetic new construction, the district has lost its significant concentration of historically linked properties and is therefore not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at this time.

**BUILDINGS (properties are considered non-contributing unless noted otherwise):**

**Third Avenue** (east side of block; from south to north):

**Buick Apartments (AHRs Site #SEW-01091)**

200 Third Avenue, on the corner of Third and Washington, built 1945; 9,000 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10; West 50" of Lot 21, 22, 23 and all of Lot 24 Block 10; Apartments over retail. Historically front façade had vertical wood siding, windows have been replaced; in 1966 walls were changed to stucco and metal siding was added.

**208 Third Avenue (AHRS Site #SEW-01092)**

Brown stucco building, constructed 1972. Determined not eligible for the National Register, 2002.

**210 Third Avenue (AHRS Site #SEW-01093)**

Quonset hut. Circa 1940s. Determined not eligible for the National Register, 2002.

**Vacant lots**

**216 Third Avenue (AHRS Site #SEW-01094)**

1925 built single-story residence. White painted stucco with a modern blue metal roof.

**220 Third Avenue (AHRS Site #SEW-01095)**

Summer 2004, a 2-story house was under construction on the site of a former 1925 residence.

**Playground and vacant lots**

**New motel/apartments building.** Site of the former Crab Pot Restaurant (AHRS Site #SEW-01096) 236 Third Avenue. The original building, constructed in 1945, consisted of wood frame, wood siding, and metal roof. This structure was destroyed in a fire in 2001. Summer 2004, a new single story, large rectangular building with horizontal siding was under construction at this location.

**Adams Street (selected buildings near Fourth Avenue):**

**Liberty Theatre (AHRS Site #SEW-01123)**

304 Adams Street. North side of Adams, West of Fourth Avenue, built 1943. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10, Original Townsite Lot 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 Block 15. Three structures, one is 5,178 square feet, the second is 2,240 square feet, third 1,650 square feet. Its not clear when each of these structures were built. The original foundation is wood pier and reinforced concrete with exterior stucco walls. The L-shaped building has a flat roof. Additional investigation is needed to determine whether this building retains its historic integrity.

**Van Gilder Hotel (AHRS Site #SEW-00160)**

308 Adams Street. 1917; 8,520 square feet, three stories. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite, East 77 feet Lots 18, 19, 20 Block 15. Originally three stories, concrete foundation, concrete walls. Built originally as a modern office and hotel by E.L. Van Gilder. Building has 12" thick exterior walls, laminated wood floors, and stucco on two sides. During the 1970s Frank Irick purchased the building and restored it. Windows retain historic appearance. It is the oldest surviving hotel in

Seward. Building listed on the National Register in 1980. Contributing building.

**First National Bank (AHRS Site #SEW-01122)**

NW Corner of Fourth and Adams, built 1975; 3,744 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite East 77" of Lots 18, 19, 20 all of Lot 17 Block 15.

**Navigant/World Express Travel. (AHRS Site #SEW-01124)**

Travel agency located on the northeast corner of Fourth and Adams, built 1941; 1,275 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original townsite Lot 21 and 22, Block 16. Original wood frame, wood siding, metal roof. Current log siding appears to be cosmetic, not structural. Concrete foundation added in 1973. Not clear as to whether this was built before or after the 1941 fire.

**Fourth Avenue - West Side (from south to north):**

**Vacant lot.** Former Site of the Seward Machine Shop (AHRS Site #SEW-663) that was removed after 1994.

**Christo's (AHRS Site #SEW-01097)**

133 Fourth Avenue, built 1942; 6,000 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10. Original wood frame building, two-story building with wood siding. In 1999 remodeling created entire second floor, wood shingled upper floor exterior, first floor exterior brick at window lines, and stone on lower floor. 2001 fire prompted a remodel. Alterations appear to be irreversible.

**Tony's Bar (AHRS Site #SEW-01098)**

135 Fourth Avenue, built 1942, 9,000 square feet, two stories. SW0000001 T01W R01W S10, South ½ Lot 2 all of Lot 3, Block 3. Two-story, wood frame building, retains façade of original stucco building with addition of wood shingle strips, first floor windows have been in-filled. Alterations may be reversible.

**Elks Club (AHRS Site #SEW-01099)**

137 & 139 Fourth Avenue, 1942, 9,000 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite North ½ Lot 2 all of Lot 1, Block 3. Two-story building. Original façade stucco exterior, concrete foundation, flat built-up roof, and wood frame. 1976 remodel includes metal siding on upper half of building. 1975 remodel replaced 4/4 double hung windows with larger non-historic plate glass windows. Interior remodeled in 1985. Alterations appear to be irreversible.



**Yukon Bar (AHRS Site #SEW-00300)**

201 Fourth Avenue, built 1935, structure is 2,100 square feet. SW0000001 T01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 20 Block 10. Wood frame, one story buildings, concrete foundation, wood frame, stucco exterior walls, built-up roof. Major remodel in 1998 replaced historic exterior, including addition of vertical wood siding above stone veneer with a sunburst at roof. Alterations are irreversible.

**Marina Restaurant (AHRS Site #SEW-01100)**

203 Fourth Avenue, built 1976, 754 square feet. SW0000001 T01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 20 Block 10. One-story frame building.

**Brown & Hawkins General Store (AHRS Site #SEW-00038)**

205, 207, 209 Fourth Avenue, Built 1904 - 1909; 81,400 square feet; SW0000001 T01S S10, Original Townsite Lot 16 & 17, Block 10. Original commercial use, concrete foundation, wood frame, wood siding exterior. Original store opened in 1903 in a one-story frame building measuring 12' X 24'. In 1904, on the same site, a two-story frame building was constructed. In 1907 a one-story 30' x 80' frame building was constructed on the north side of the 1904 structure, and was acquired by Brown & Hawkins sometime prior to 1909 when they added a second story. Between 1911 and 1915 Brown & Hawkins purchased a one-story building on the south side of the 1904 structure. Remodel in 1940 added stucco exterior walls and replaced historic windows. Remodels in 1999 and 2002 removed stucco in-fill, windows returned to 1/1 double hung on second floor, historic plate glass windows returned to first floor. Façade returned to historic appearance. It is the oldest commercial enterprise in Seward and building is still used for same business today. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988. Contributing building.

**211 Fourth Avenue (AHRS Site #SEW-01101)**

Office space, built 1993, 1,600 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 15, South half of Lot 14, Block 10.

**DJ's Wheel House (AHRS Site #SEW-01102)**

215 Fourth Avenue, built 1956. 6,000 square feet. SW2000202 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 12 A Block 10. Bar and motel, original building concrete block, square frame addition added in 1987. Second and third story additions added in 1999 are irreversible.

**Orlander Building (AHRS Site #SEW-01089)** 219 Fourth Avenue, built 1916; 3,192 square feet; SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 11, Block 10. Original concrete foundation, flat built-up roof, stucco exteriors. Building retains much of historic exterior except it has been painted light green with green and pink trim. South side wall has corrugated metal siding. Further investigation is needed to see if these alterations are reversible.

**Starbird Studio (AHRS Site #SEW-01103)**

221 Fourth Avenue, built 1941; 2,448 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 10 Block 10. Original stucco exterior, concrete foundation, flat built-up roof. Vertical siding on lower portion and diagonal siding on upper portion above awning has been added. Windows appear to be same as in historical photos. Current business has added unsympathetic awning but alterations appear to be reversible.

**Osbo Building (AHRS Site #SEW-01090)**

223 Fourth Avenue, built 1905; 2,632 square feet; SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 9 Block 10. The building originally had concrete foundation, frame structure, stucco exterior. First floor retail, second apartment. Windows appear to be same as historic although shutters on second floor windows have been removed. Also, the original recessed entry has been changed to meet the sidewalk and decorative cornice was removed. Further investigation is needed to determine if alterations are reversible.

**Seward Commercial Company (AHRS Site #SEW-00413)**

225 Fourth Avenue, built 1906-1908; 6,200 square feet; SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 8 and south 7 feet two inches of Lot 7, Block 10. Original exterior stucco, concrete foundation, frame building. Owner received historical building loan in 1987, but remodel appears to be interior. Alterations appear irreversible.

**Fire & Ice Corp. (AHRS Site #SEW-01104)**

227 Fourth Avenue, built 1916; 2,366 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite North 22 feet, ten inches of Lot 7 Block 10. Original exterior stucco, concrete foundation, wood frame, and flat roof. In 1960 a canopy was built over front of building, façade renovated with shingle siding. 1977 renovation covered second floor Mansard addition with shake shingle siding. Alterations appear to be irreversible.

**Apollo Restaurant (AHRS Site #SEW-01105)**

229 Fourth Avenue, built 1992. 4,620 square feet. SW0910013 T01S R01W S10, Lot 5A Block 10.

**Stylin' Stitches (AHRS Site #SEW-01106)**

233 Fourth Avenue, two structures, both built in 1956; one 2,920 square feet, the other is 936 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 4 Block 10. Original construction concrete foundation, concrete block, flat roofed two-story building, with recessed entry. The building façade on Fourth Avenue has been altered with addition of vertical wood siding.

**Public restroom (building) and pavilion (structure),** corner of Adams and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 237 and 239 Fourth Avenue, built 2002. The lot consists of pathways that lead to a small pavilion with benches and an adjacent public restroom.

**Fourth Avenue - East side (from south to north):**

**Arcade Building (AHRS Site #SEW-664)**

132, 134, 136, 138 Fourth Avenue, built 1943; 8,349 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lo5 37, 38, 39 and 40 of Block 4. This building replaced the original Arcade building which was destroyed in the fire of 1941, sparing some of the first floor and basement. The 1943 exterior is mostly stucco, with concrete foundation and flat roof, with horizontal wood siding on Washington Street side exterior. Several of the windows on the Washington Street elevation have been replaced with modern windows and some remodeling as occurred near the steps of this elevation as well. Summer 2004, the building exterior was painted a dark brick red color which is a striking contrast to the historic white or off-white color.

**Showcase Lounge (AHRS Site #SEW-01107)**

206 Fourth Avenue, 2 structures, built 1950, 4,852 square feet each. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Lot 24, 25 Block 9. Currently a beauty shop combination barber shop occupies one building, the lounge the other. Horizontal wood siding on beauty shop and narrow brick on lounge façade. Apartment upstairs.

**Alaska Shop (AHRS Site #SEW-01108)**

210 Fourth Avenue, built 1941. Current façade has stone with vertical wood siding. Original Townsite Lot 26, Block 9. Changes have been made from single large pane to multi-pane windows and the false front now consists of a vertical wood siding appearance with modern lettering having replaced the 1940s style lettering. Alterations may be reversible.

**Vacant Lot - lot 27**

**Quilt Shop (AHRS Site #SEW-01109)**

216 Fourth Avenue, built 1943, two structures, one built 1943, 3000 square feet; the other built 1943, 3,000 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite North 16" of Lot 28, all of Lot 29 on Block 9. Original façade stucco, concrete foundation, built-up roof. Extensive remodels 1994, including entire false front and new awning. Tax Assessor notes in 2000, quality and type of remodel below average.

**Urbach's (AHRS Site #SEW-01110)**

218 Fourth Avenue, 1941; 2,700 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 30 Block 9. Original building concrete foundation, stucco siding. Current appearance is similar to the original building and alterations appear to be reversible.

**Seward Shop (AHRS Site #SEW-01111)**

220 Fourth Avenue, 1942; 3,000 square feet; SW0000001 T01S T01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 31 Block 9. Original concrete block exterior walls, concrete foundation and block frame and built-up roof. Current appearance is

similar to the original building except for the paint color. Alterations appear to be reversible.

**McMullen Building (AHRS Site #SEW-01112)**

222 Fourth Avenue, 1925, two structures; one is 3,000 square feet, the other 2,700 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 32 Block 9. Original appearance concrete foundation, wood frame, concrete block building. In 1966 slate was added to first floor exterior, vertical redwood siding to second floor exterior. Alterations may be reversible.

**Vacant Lot - lots 34 and 33**

**Seward Bakery Building (AHRS Site #SEW-01113)**

228 Fourth Avenue, built 1942; 2,400 square feet, SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 35 Block 9. Original concrete block foundation, concrete frame, block exterior walls. Extensive remodeling has occurred since construction, including new front façade, window and door replacement, new siding, hipped roof canopy and new parapet wall. Alterations appear to be irreversible.

**Carson Meats (AHRS Site #SEW-01114)**

230 Fourth Avenue, built 1920; 3,080 square feet. SW0000001 T01W R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 36 Block 9. Original concrete foundation, wood frame, stone and wood siding. Front was remodeled in 1978, including addition of metal siding, rear addition and new aluminum windows. Further investigation is needed to determine if alterations are irreversible.

**Vacant building (AHRS Site #SEW-01115)**

232 Fourth Avenue, built 1966; 2,210 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite, Lot 37 Block 9.

**Seward Trading Company (AHRS Site #SEW-01116)**

234 Fourth Avenue, built 1922; 12,000 square feet. SW0980034 T01S R01W S10 Original Lindsey replat #2 Lot 38A Block 9. Original concrete foundation, built-up roof, wood frame, stucco exterior walls. Extensive remodels through building's history include addition of four one-bedroom apartments in 1966, first floor remodeled into a market, front façade remodeled in 1977. Building again totally renovated in 1999. The new steel siding and replacement windows give the building a modern appearance. Alterations appear to be irreversible.

**Washington Street:**

**Old Solly's Building (AHRS Site #SEW-209)** on the east side of Fourth.

411 Washington Street, built ca. 1916; 5,498 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 1 and 2, Block 4. Cal M. Brosius purchased these lots in 1911. Photographs show that this building was constructed around 1916. Mr. Brosius lived for many years in the second-story

apartment. The building's original floor plan conforms to the trapezoidal lot plan. On the south side, the second floor extends over the first and is supported by columns. The building once had a distinctive wall of second floor windows facing the south. Sometime after 1973, the windows were closed in and the number of columns was reduced from seven to five.

The north side of the building originally had four entrances and now has six. In 1994, a shed roof protected the entryways; this roof was gone by 2004. The original north elevation roof line was straight, giving this side of the building a boxed appearance. Sometime after 1973, the roof line was accentuated so that it now resembles a modified false-front that includes a slightly peaked roof in the center.

Modern windows are on the north and south exteriors. Exterior siding is tongue-in-groove on the ground floor and metal on the second. The second floor siding on the north and west elevations is vertical, while the rest of the building is horizontal siding. The roof has a slight slope to the south. After 1973, a second story addition was placed over the east storeroom and garage.

Mr. and Mrs. Sol Urie purchased the property in 1963, operating a bar and liquor store until 1973. Mr. Urie had owned and operated the Seward Bakery and was a well-known resident who was involved with many civic organizations. In spite of its connection to important Seward citizens, this building has undergone major and irreversible changes. While the building retains its setting, distinctive lot shape and general scale and massing, significant changes especially to the windows on the south and north elevations greatly impact the historic appearance. As such, the building has lost its historic architectural integrity.

#### **Residence (AHRS Site #SEW-01125) west side of Fourth Avenue**

310 Washington Avenue, built 1934. Located behind Yukon Bar as part of the Yukon Bar parcel. The exterior that fronts Washington Street consists of vertical wood siding that matches the Yukon Bar building. Metal roof. Changes appear irreversible.

#### **C Jays Pawnshop (AHRS Site #SEW-01126) west side of Fourth Avenue**

Washington Avenue, adjacent to the 310 Washington residence, built 1943; 1,054 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite West 17', East 50' of Lots 21, 22 & 23, Block 10. Small building with false front and stucco siding. Much of the original exterior of the building remains, however a modern arctic entryway with vertical siding and metal roof impact the historic appearance.

#### **Railway Avenue**

**Brosius & Noon Building Supply (AHRS Site #SEW-00151)** (Seaview Plaza) west side of Fourth Avenue. 302 Railway, built 1906, 1907, 1909; remodeled 1984; 16,082 square feet. SW0930014 T01S R01W S10, Lot 32A Block 3. The original buildings are a two-story wood frame carpenter shop built in 1909; a one-

story wood frame building supply store was built 1907; and a one-story wood frame warehouse built in 1906. The buildings and businesses were bought by W.M. Sayers who added sled making to the business. In 1909 Charles Krefting purchased the building and became business partners with Cal Brosius. Later Cal Brosius bought out Krefting and acquired John Noon as his partner. Upon Brosius' death in 1941, John Paulsteiner purchased the business, followed by Albert Gordon McRae who continued the building supply operation. The business operated for almost 60 years. The buildings retain some of the original roof lines, setting, mass and scale. However, changes over the years including the alteration of window and door openings, the addition of modern windows and modern exterior siding have compromised the buildings' integrity. Owners during the 1980s converted the buildings into a shopping mall. Renovations to the buildings' exterior are so drastic that even tax assessors records indicate the building was built in 1984. Alterations are irreversible.

**Fifth Avenue - West Side** (from south to north; in addition to these buildings at least two lots are paved parking areas on this block):

**Legends Restaurant**

201 Fifth Avenue built 1985; 3,538 square feet. SW0830003 T01S R01W S10 Lot 17A. This building replaced, the Pioneer Bar or Louvre (AHRS Site #SEW-00301), a two-story frame building with asbestos siding built in 1905. This building was torn down in 1983 to make room for the new restaurant. While a small portion of the original building remains, the vast majority of the building's historic fabric is no longer extant.

**New Seward Saloon (AHRS Site #SEW-01117)**

209 Fifth Avenue, built 1994; 1,957 square feet. SW0000001 T01S S10 Original Townsite Lot 16 Block 9.

**First Video (AHRS Site #SEW-01118)**

213 Fifth Avenue, built 1947; 1,950 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite South 10' of Lot 13 and North 25' of Lot 14 Block 9. Original concrete foundation, concrete block frame, flat built-up roof. 1972 renovation changed historic windows, new unsympathetic awning and signage added recently. Alterations appear to be reversible.

**New Seward Hotel (AHRS Site #SEW-01119)**

217 Fifth Avenue, built 1944; 7,200 square feet, SW0940031 T01S R01W S10, New Seward Townsite Hotel Replat Lot 12 A Block 9. Original hotel had concrete foundation, wood frame, wood siding. Side entry remodeled in 1975, front entry enclosed in 1979. In 1984 a new hotel building was constructed and a gable roof boxed in so part of the old building could connect to the new. Changes to the building include the addition of vinyl siding and new non-historic appearing windows.

**New Seward Hotel (AHRS Site #SEW-01119; AHRS Site #SEW-01120)**

219 & 221 Fifth Avenue, built 1985; 6,000 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite N 16" of Lot 28 all Lot 29 Block 9.

**Rez Resurrection Bodyworks (AHRS Site #SEW-01121)**

231 Fifth Avenue, built 1950; 2,857 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lot 5 Block 9. Original concrete foundation, concrete block walls, wood siding, no windows. Remodel added windows, gable roof, vinyl siding.

**Fifth Avenue - East Side** (from south to north; excluding properties on both corners: the library on the NE corner and the Hotel Edgewater on the SE corner- both modern construction)

**Mai Residence (AHRS Site #SEW-01129)**

212 Fifth Avenue, built 1940; 1,070 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lots 26, 27, 28 Block 8. The original residence was a one-story building with a plain wood shingle exterior and moderate pitch roof with clipped gables. Sometime after the 1950s, the south elevation was expanded, which eliminated the arctic entryways on the façade and south elevations. New modern windows and doors were added, including a sliding door and a deck on the southeast elevation. Addition of a metal roof eliminated the clipped gable design. A small shed/garage is adjacent to the residence. Alterations are irreversible.

**Harbor Dinner Club (AHRS Site #SEW-01128)**

220 Fifth Avenue. Tax assessors records show structures built 1945 and 1950s; two structures, first is 4,656 square feet, the second is 948 square feet. SW0970023 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite of Seward Norman Replat, Lot 29A Block 8. Original Townsite lots 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33 were replatted in 1997 to Lot 29A.

According to the current building owners, around 1935 Charles Cooper built a home on one of these lots. The lots changed hands in 1938 and in 1941 they were sold to Harry Kawabe, a Japanese businessman who was interned during World War II but was able to retain property in Seward. Kawabe sold the property to the Seward Bills Club (later known as the Elks Club) in 1946. A 1948 Sanborn map shows only one structure on these lots; a single dwelling house that is located adjacent to the alleyway. A 1950 aerial photograph shows that the large building expansion has not yet taken place. By the 1954 Sanborn map, however, a large structure is outlined that covers two lots, includes the earlier house, extends to front Fifth Avenue and is marked B.P.O.E. (Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks). The Elks Club owned the lots until February 1956. By 1962 lot owners Robert and Catheryn Zentmire had moved and incorporated the Fort Raymond Officer's Club to this lot (the portion facing Fifth Avenue), and renamed their business the "Harbor Dinner Club." The rocked façade was added within a few years. A south addition was added by 1998 (personal communication from current restaurant owner Candace Norman to NPS employee Judy Kesler, 2003). The original Harbor Residence sited near the alley, has been incorporated into the larger building complex (per Pat Williams communication to NPS employee Judy Kesler, 2003). Today's appearance is a building complex consisting of

a series of separate structures (approximately 5 structures) that have been joined together. A second story addition for apartments was added over the back part of the building in more recent times.

**Johnson Property & Cabin (AHRS Site #SEW-01127)**

228 Fifth Avenue, built 1942; 1,488 square feet. SW0000001 T01S R01W S10 Original Townsite Lots 34, 35 and South 20' of 36 Block 8. According to tax assessor's records, a log residence was built on Lot 35 in 1942. The building retains most of its historic windows. The cabin now has a metal roof and modern doors. Alterations are irreversible.

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**6. Statement of Significance**  
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**Applicable National Register Criteria:**

**A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.**

The district, with the exception of several Blocks that have been replatted in Seward's recent past, are all in the Original Townsite that Frank Ballaine designed and surveyed in 1903. Building in the district paralleled the construction of the railroad, which was the primary reason the Ballaine brothers chose this spot on Resurrection Bay. Seward was the principal gateway to Interior Alaska following the completion of the railroad in 1923 until the opening of the military constructed Whittier port during World War II. From 1903 to 1943 buildings within the commercial district reflected a continuity and cohesiveness of building types and commercial related activity.

Criterion A would be the most likely criteria with which to determine historic eligibility for this district.

**B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past:**

Several locally significant persons were involved in the development of this district. In the case of developers John and Frank Ballaine, the district they founded and platted has lost its historic integrity. Two buildings that may have been considered individually under Criterion B are:

Old Solly's, 411 Washington Avenue, that is associated with Sol Urie; and  
Brosius & Noon Building Supply, 302 Railway, associated with Cal Brosius.



Both of these buildings, however, have undergone major alterations. To be eligible to the National Register a property needs to meet the criteria for both significance and integrity. While these individuals remain important to Seward's history, the properties associated with them lack integrity. Because these properties are not eligible to the National Register, no historic context was prepared to address Criterion B.

- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.**

This district is not eligible under Criterion C.

- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important to Prehistory or history.**

This district is not eligible under Criterion D.

**Criteria Considerations:**

- |                          |          |   |
|--------------------------|----------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>A</b> | <b>owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.</b>             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>B</b> | <b>removed from its original location.</b>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>C</b> | <b>a birthplace or a grave.</b>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>D</b> | <b>a cemetery.</b>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>E</b> | <b>a reconstructed building, object, or structure.</b>                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>F</b> | <b>a commemorative property.</b>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>G</b> | <b>less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.</b> |

**Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)**

Exploration/settlement  
Transportation

**Period of Significance: 1903-1943**

**Significant Dates: 1903-1943**

=====

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

From 1903 through 1943, the Seward Commercial Historic District reflected a consistent pattern of commercial development and use in connection with the town's settlement and transportation history. Seward served as the

principal gateway to all of Interior Alaska during the last two decades of this time period. For over forty years, the Seward downtown business district offered a variety of goods and services to meet the customer needs in a frontier town. Changes to the district occurred following the 1941 fire which destroyed most of the buildings on the east side of Fourth Avenue. There was a flurry of rebuilding which lasted until 1943, although several lots continued to remain vacant on the southeast side of Fourth Avenue. After this time, new construction occurred at a much slower rate, reflecting the economic impact of business being diverted to the newly constructed Whittier port. The street setting with building orientation remains along with a handful of intact historic buildings. Unfortunately, the district no longer retains enough historic architectural integrity to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Seward's Beginnings**

Alaska was a burgeoning and mysterious territory in 1903. Mining its vast natural resources seemed a promising enterprise and caught the attention of the impoverished individual and wealthy industrialist alike. Interest had boomed at the turn of the century with the discovery of gold in the Klondike gold fields in nearby Yukon Territory and various spots throughout interior Alaska. Promising coal mines near Matanuska, Healy and the Bering River and rich copper discoveries in Kennecott also lured prospectors and entrepreneurs. This influx into the remote and unwelcoming interior of Alaska created a demand for a means to deliver supplies into and ship Alaskan products out of the area. A railroad into interior Alaska seemed the obvious answer. Seattle developers Frank and John Ballaine saw that need and recognized it as an investment opportunity. They chose this site at the head of Resurrection Bay as the perfect spot from which to build a railroad. With its deep water, year-round ice free port, this picturesque village seemed the perfect spot for his "planned" community.

### **Settlement**

Seward, Alaska is located at the head of Resurrection Bay on the Kenai Peninsula. Pre-historically, early Native inhabitants include the nine sub-tribes of the Alutiiq Chugach of the Prince William Sound region. The area may also have been inhabited by the Unikugmuit. A village called Kuta-Kuq was located near where Seward is today. Another village, Kanilik, was also thought to be nearby. The area was not heavily colonized by Russian explorers, but Alexander Baranov set up a ship building yard in Resurrection Bay in 1792. In 1794, the first sailing vessel built in Alaska, the *Phoenix*, was launched there. Doing business in this remote environment overwhelmed the construction colony and it was abandoned shortly after the launch.

Almost a hundred years later in 1884, Captain Frank Lowell and his wife, Mary Forgal, landed at present day Seward. They chose the spot not for its beauty or convenience, but because Mary was about to give birth and she insisted they stop! The serendipitous location suited them, however, and

they proceeded to make their home on land now known as Seward. Through the years, the growing family played host to and traded with fur buyers, explorers, government geologists and prospectors. Frank abandoned his wife and family in 1893 leaving Mary and their nine children, many of whom were by now married and living on nearby homesteads. Mary and the children filed for homestead rights in 1903. Their land would become the core of the Seward of today when Frank Ballaine, a developer from Seattle, purchased Mary Lowell's land for 37 town lots and \$4,000 later in 1903. Ballaine and his brother John had come to establish a town for the sole purpose of building a railroad to Fairbanks in Alaska's interior. The Resurrection Bay's year-round ice free port provided a perfect spot for the construction of a railroad. On August 28, 1903 the Ballaine party of "Thirty-five passengers, twenty-five employees, fourteen horses, a pile driver, a saw mill and provisions" was off-loaded at the site.

### **Town Development**

The original town site plat reflected a neatly planned community. The wide streets running east and west were named after the first five U.S. Presidents: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. The avenues running north and south were numbered, beginning with First Avenue on the west side of town. There were 40 city blocks with alleyways. The 1211 lots each measured 30' wide by 100' long. With the selling of lots, many businesses began setting up along Fourth Avenue as the clearing of tree stumps continued for this main passageway.

The business district grew and developed, primarily along Fourth Avenue, because of its location directly next to Seward's main dock. By 1904, over forty businesses were established in Seward, including the Brown and Hawkins General Store. Hotels, general stores, restaurants, and bars were built in one and two-story wood frame buildings here to facilitate the needs of passengers and shippers as they came in and out of Seward. Some of these buildings had small rooms or apartments which accommodated Seward's housing needs. A lumber yard, and later the Brosius and Noon building supply business, was built near the railroad tracks to facilitate efficient off-loading of supplies. The Pioneer Bar was built on Fifth, where it remained until 1985. The town included some modern conveniences such as electricity, as well as indoor plumbing when pipes were laid in the downtown area by 1906.

### **Transportation**

The Ballaine brothers had promoted the Seward area as an excellent place to conduct business, and indeed it grew. However, the Alaska Central Railroad did not. It was bankrupt in just a few years after only 71 miles of track had been laid. A new company, the Alaska Northern Railway, operated for a few more years. But when the federal government closed Alaska to coal claims, business dried up and the railway was effectively abandoned. In 1914 the federal government chose to build its own railroad to Fairbanks, and in 1915 it chose Seward as its southern terminus. With this decision,

Seward had the potential to become the town the Ballaine brothers had once envisioned. Seward also established itself as a gateway to the booming Iditarod gold fields. The trail began in Seward and made its way through the Alaska Range, to the Iditarod Area, and on to Nome.

To some extent, Seward's businesses reflected the building and bust cycles of the railroad as properties changed hands or expanded, a pattern that continued for decades. Along Fourth Avenue, the remodeled Seward Commercial Building boasted a new pressed steel siding, while both J.L. Graef's hardware and Brown and Hawkins stores made significant additions to their properties. Around the corner on Railway Avenue Brosius and Noon building suppliers expanded into three buildings. Cal Brosius built what is now known as "Old Solly's" on the trapezoidal shaped lot located between Railway and Washington streets, where he lived in the apartment building for many years. By June 1915, construction was underway for the first concrete sidewalk in town along the Northern property at Washington and Fourth. That same year, Fourth Avenue was graded and street lights were extended along Adams and Third.

By the early 1920s, the Osbo Building, Orlander Building, and Carson Meats, were constructed where they remain today along Fourth Avenue. Offering some respite for weary travelers was the Van Gilder Hotel, located just around the corner of Fourth on the north side of Adams Street. An increase in railroad and shipping business had spurred building activity in Seward. Some of the new buildings consisted of more permanent materials such as concrete and stucco as found in the Seward Trading Company (1922) and McMullen (1925) buildings on Fourth. The crowning jewel of the town, however, was the Arcade building. Sited on the distinctive triangular lot facing Fourth Avenue, the three story building served to greet visitors as they arrived from the dock. Associated features included sidewalk vault lights which were placed in the pavement along Fourth and Washington. Popular in large cities, vault lights consisted of glass prisms set in concrete with steel reinforcing bars forming a grid which allowed daylight to filter into basement areas. Other refined town features included the Victorian street lamp posts and the ornamental Hoben Park, located across the street from the Arcade.

The Alaska Railroad was completed in 1923 and Seward, now the undisputed terminus for passengers and goods going into Alaska, had a secure economic future. This was a time when almost every person going into or out of central or interior Alaska passed through Seward. A person could board the train in Fairbanks, travel to Seward, and board a ship there for Seattle or other points in the United States. Seward was also an important vehicle through which Alaskans received supplies. Almost everything came to Alaska via ship, then railroad or sled to points in interior Alaska.

One of the individuals who made such a trip was President Warren G. Harding, who arrived in Seward on July 13, 1923. Seward, which would become famous for exuberant celebrations, rolled out the red carpet. A welcome committee of town dignitaries met the ship and the Presidential

party was later escorted to Oddfellows Hall, where the Hardings met the children of Seward. The party then walked to the depot, where they boarded the new Alaska Railroad and made their way to Anchorage.

Fires were a problem in many early towns and Seward was no different. A fire in 1916, destroyed the two-story Daggett building, located along Washington and Fourth, where the current Arcade building stands today. The 1941 fire, however, brought a significant change to the district as most of the buildings on the east side of Fourth Avenue burned down. The concrete walls of the McMullin grocery store are credited with stopping the fire from spreading farther north on the block. A subsequent fire destroyed most of the buildings on the west side of Fourth Avenue between Washington and Railway(the Seward Machine Shop survived). Several of Seward's business owners immediately set to rebuilding. By 1943, approximately nine businesses along Fourth Avenue were built which filled in six of the lots on the east side and three of the lots across the street from the Arcade building. These buildings were similar in style and in function as to the other businesses within the district and provided continuity of the commercial district. The streetscape remained largely the same, although there were more vacant lots on the east side of Fourth Avenue than were prior to the fire.

Additional buildings within the district that were constructed after the fire included the Liberty Theatre on Adams Street, CJ Pawnshop on Washington, and the Johnson property on Fifth. After the rebuilding phase, however, construction drastically slowed down as a direct result of an economic decline. World War II facilitated the need for another port, which was built in nearby Whittier in Prince William Sound. Tunnels were constructed through a mountain which connected the Whittier docks to the small railroad town of Portage on Turnagain Arm. It provided a shortcut to Anchorage, making Seward a less desirable port.

From the later half of the 1940s to 1950 there was a smattering of new construction within the district including the Buick Apartments on Third and the Harbor Club and First Video on Fifth. Since 1950 six new buildings have been built on Fourth Avenue. Seward has struggled to adjust to its changing role, and in recent years has enjoyed tourism as its lifeblood. The downtown commercial district has changed to accommodate tourism, and most of the businesses now cater to tourists. Seward enjoys a reputation as one of Alaska's premiere tourist attractions, thanks in great part to the very attributes Ballaine appreciated about this location over 100 years ago.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Alaska Geographic. *The Kenai Peninsula*. Vol. 21, Number 2, 1994.

Barry, Mary. *Seward Alaska: A History of the Gateway City*, Vol. 1, Vol. 2, Vol. 3. M.J.P. Barry, 323 West Harvard Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99503.

Goodson, Heather. *Report on Chain of Title*. Historic Preservation Consulting, Eugene Oregon, for Alaska Regional Office of the National Park Service, Anchorage, AK 2004.

Kesler, Judy. *Seward Mult-Agency Visitor Center: A Review of the Site Through Historical Photographs and Geographic Information Systems*. Alaska Support Office, NPS, 2004.

Mobley, Charles M. & Associates, *Historic Architecture Survey of the Waterfront, Seward, Alaska, for the Proposed Institute of Marine Science Facility*. For Dames & Moore, Inc., Anchorage, Alaska for U.S. Department of the Interior, Anchorage, AK, 1994.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS)**

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☒ Federal agency  
☒ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Name of repository:

=====  
**10. Geographical Data**  
=====

**Acreage of Property**

**UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)**

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	—	—	—	3		
2	—	—	—	4		
	—	See continuation sheet.				

## **Verbal Boundary Description**

The potential historic district is bounded on the north by the north side of Adams Street between the northeast corner of Third Avenue and the northwest corner of Fifth Avenue. The southern boundary is Railway Avenue between Fifth Avenue and the southeast corner of Third Avenue. The eastern boundary is primarily the west side of Fifth Avenue between Railway Avenue and Adams Street, and includes only three properties (Johnson Property, Harbor Dinner Club, and Mai Residence) on the east side of the block. The east side of Third Avenue, between Railway Avenue and Adams Street, is the western boundary of the study area.

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### **11. Form Prepared By**

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Julie L. Johnson  
2832 Marion Street  
Denver, CO 80205  
303.298.0914

#### **Prepared for:**

National Park Service  
Alaska Regional Office  
240 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99501

#### **Additional information and editing by:**

Janet Clemens, Historian  
National Park Service  
Alaska Regional Office  
240 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
907/644-3461